

GOVERNMENT (REGIONAL) COMMENTS (GR)

GR1



Metro

Metropolitan Transportation Authority

One Gateway Plaza
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

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August 12, 2013

Smita Deshpande, Branch Chief
Caltrans-District 12
2201 Dupont Drive, Suite 200
Irvine, CA 92612
Attn: 405 SDEIR-DEIS Comment Period

RE: San Diego Freeway (I-405) Improvement Project Supplemental Draft Environmental
Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Ms. Deshpande,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Caltrans Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the proposed San Diego Freeway I-405 Improvement Project in Orange County. The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) is supportive of the efforts of the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) and Caltrans to increase mobility and reduce congestion in the Southern California region and appreciates the investment in this key corridor. LACMTA would like to continue supporting OCTA by facilitating collaboration between Los Angeles County and Orange County cities and agencies in order to help address the impacts identified in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS.

Based on our review of the Supplemental Draft EIR traffic analysis and results, LACMTA offer the following comments concerning the proposed project:

General Comments

1. Traffic measures T-10 and T-11 are a good first step towards addressing the Project's impact on Los Angeles County roads. We encourage OCTA and Caltrans District 12 to work with the City of Long Beach and Caltrans District 7 to ensure that these traffic measures are acceptable and to establish a "rough proportionality" for their cost that is also agreeable to all parties. Because this Project is seeking to improve the State Highway System, we encourage OCTA and Caltrans District 12 to fully fund the traffic measures proposed for SR-22/7th Street.
2. As documented in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS, the improvements to I-405 on the Orange County side, under all alternatives, will result in increases in traffic volumes on both I-605 and I-405 on the Los Angeles County side. As part of Measure R's I-605 "Hot Spots" program, LACMTA and the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG) have begun studying improvement solutions for the I-405/I-605/SR-22 interchange and adjacent freeway segments in Los Angeles County. LACMTA is currently conducting an I-405 Freeway (OC Line to LAX) HOV to HOT Conversion Feasibility Study. As part of this study, we are exploring the possible continuation of Express Lanes on I-405 into Los Angeles County, as well as on I-605 to I-105 from the Orange County line. We request that Caltrans and OCTA coordinate with LACMTA on the terminus design to make sure the

GR1 (Continued)



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proposed cross-section of each of the build alternatives in Orange County do not create new bottlenecks at the county line. We also encourage OCTA and Caltrans District 12 to collaborate with LACMTA and the GCCOG in further developing improvement solutions for this interchange, as these improvements would benefit Orange County freeways as well.

3. The Orange County Travel Analysis Model (OCTAM) was developed and validated primarily for application within Orange County. As part of the City of Long Beach's review, arterial volumes were compared between OCTAM and Gateway Cities' model to ensure the volume differences were not significant. A similar comparison of freeway forecast volumes between OCTAM and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) regional model or Gateway Cities' model may be warranted to ensure freeway forecast volumes in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS were not underestimated.

Specific Comments

1. The Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS states that Alternative 3 would require nine mandatory and 20 advisory design exceptions at one or more locations along the corridor. Please specify locations.
2. Ramp analysis was included in the appendices of the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS, but they were not summarized in the body of the report in order to identify any potential traffic impacts. Please include.
3. Traffic volumes on I-405 SB to I-605 NB and I-605 SB to I-405 NB connectors are forecast to decrease under the Build alternatives. These volumes should not decrease as a result of the I-405 Improvement Project unless volumes divert to local arterials to avoid freeway congestion. Please check the volumes at these locations.
4. Figures 3-11, 3-12 and 3-13 generally show lower forecast HOV volumes on I-405 in Los Angeles County under Alternative 3 compared to Alternatives 1 and 2, despite the dual Express Lanes feeding into the single HOV lane in Los Angeles County. Please check the volumes.
5. The study lacks detailed operational analysis of the merge locations on I-405. We recommend that microscopic simulation analysis be performed at merge points and weave locations to ensure transition point design can minimize weaving and safety issues. The following locations may be considered for microscopic simulation analysis:
 - GP lane where lane reductions occur
 - HOT (Alt 3) egress/ingress point where 2-lane HOT reduces to 1-lane existing HOV or future HOT
6. The Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS lacks a detailed analysis of the I-405/I-605/SR-22 interchange for each of the Build alternative lane configurations. Given the importance of

GR1 (Continued)



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this interchange location at the county line, please provide a focused analysis of this location. } 9 cont.

LACMTA looks forward to reviewing the Supplemental Final EIR/EIS. If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Kathy McCune at 213-922-7241 or by email at McCuneK@metro.net.

Please send the Supplemental Final EIR/EIS to the following address:

LACMTA CEQA Review Manager
Attn: Nick Saponara
One Gateway Plaza MS 99-23-4
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

Sincerely,

Nick Saponara
CEQA Review Manager, Countywide Planning

GR2



South Coast
Air Quality Management District

21865 Copley Drive, Diamond Bar, CA 91765-4178
(909) 396-2000 • www.aqmd.gov

E-Mailed: August 13, 2013
405.Supplemental.Draft.EIR.EIS@parsons.com

August 13, 2013

Ms. Smita Deshpande
Caltrans-District 12, "Attn: 405 SDEIR-DEIS Comment Period"
2201 Dupont Drive, Suite 200
Irvine, CA 92612

Review of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report (Supplemental Draft EIR) for the Interstate 405 Improvement Project

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The following comments are intended to provide guidance to the lead agency and should be incorporated into the Final Environmental Impact Report (Supplemental DEIR or Final EIR) as appropriate. We maintain our concerns from the previous comment letter and incorporate them here by reference.

Based on a review of the Supplemental Draft EIR the SCAQMD staff is concerned about potential local, regional and cumulative air quality impacts from the proposed project. In a comment letter submitted to the lead agency on July 17, 2012 regarding the original DEIR for the proposed project the SCAQMD staff expressed concern that the lead agency did not analyze the bottleneck at the north end of the project boundary (I-605 junction) that could result in additional regional and localized air quality impacts. ¹ Since the certification of the Final EIR for the project the lead agency completed a Supplemental Traffic Study for the Long Beach area (i.e., Supplemental Traffic Study) that demonstrates additional traffic impacts. For example, Table 3-6 of the Supplemental DEIR indicates that the project will increase density to capacity ratios along the I-405/I-605 mainline to Studebaker Road during AM and PM peak hours. However, the lead agency did not quantify any potential air quality impacts from this change in traffic activity.

Further, the lead agency relied on additional traffic mitigation measures in the Supplemental DEIR (i.e., Mitigation Measures T-10 and T-11) to reduce the project's traffic impacts to a less than significant level. However, because these mitigation measures are contingent on the availability of funding, they lack enforceability as nothing in the Supplemental DEIR ensures funding for these measures. Also, the significance determination for the proposed project is based on a comparison between the project and no project baseline that appears to be contrary to recent guidance provided in the

¹ See comment #8 from SCAQMD Comments at:
<http://www.aqmd.gov/ceqa/igr/2012/July/DEIRI405Improve.pdf>

GR2 (Continued)

Ms. Smita Deshpande

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August 13, 2013

Neighbors for Smart Rail court decision.² Details regarding these comments are attached to this letter.

4 cont.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092.5, please provide the SCAQMD with written responses to all comments contained herein prior to the adoption of the Final EIR. Further, staff is available to work with the lead agency to address these issues and any other questions that may arise. Please contact Dan Garcia, Air Quality Specialist CEQA Section, at (909) 396-3304, if you have any questions regarding the enclosed comments.

5

Sincerely,



Ian MacMillan
Program Supervisor, CEQA Inter-Governmental Review
Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

Attachment

IM:DG

ORC130627-01
Control Number

GR2 (Continued)

Ms. Smita Deshpande

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August 13, 2013

Air Quality Impacts

1. In a comment letter submitted to the lead agency on July 17, 2012 regarding the Draft EIR for the proposed project the SCAQMD staff expressed concern that the lead agency did not analyze the bottleneck at the north end of the project site (I-605 junction) that could result in additional localized and regional air quality impacts. Since the release of the Draft EIR for the project the lead agency completed a Supplemental Traffic Study for the Long Beach area (i.e., Supplemental Traffic Study) that demonstrates increased traffic congestion in the aforementioned area. For example, Table 3-6 of the Supplemental DEIR indicates that the project will increase density to capacity ratios along the I-405/I-605 mainline to Studebaker Road during AM and PM peak hours. In addition, comparisons of project alternatives to no project alternatives demonstrate that GP lanes may experienced increased traffic volumes after buildout. However, the lead agency concluded that this increase in traffic activity will not result in any new air quality impacts. The lead agency should provide additional technical analysis in the Final EIR to substantiate this conclusion.

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Operational Mitigation Measures

2. The lead agency relies on mitigation measures T-10 and T-11 to ensure that the project does not result in significant cumulative traffic impacts. However, on page 4-27 the lead agency indicates that it is possible that these measure will never be implemented due to a lack of funding between the City of Long Beach and the State of California. Given this statement the lead agency proceeded to determine that the project's traffic impacts are insignificant and does not identify any contingency measures to ensure less than significant traffic impacts from the project. Therefore, SCAQMD staff recommends that the lead agency provide additional mitigation measures (e.g., backstop mitigation measures) in the Supplemental FEIR to ensure the project does not create adverse traffic impacts that may result in additional air quality impacts from increased levels of congestions.

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Baseline

3. The lead agency appears to determine the project's impacts by comparing the project alternatives to the no project (future conditions) scenario. This comparison is based on traffic activity metrics such as volume to capacity (V/C), density to capacity (D/C) and level of service (LOS). Further, the lead agency presents the existing traffic activity levels (2009) but does not use this activity as the project baseline. This appears to be contrary to the recent California Supreme Court decision for *Neighbors for Smart Rail v. Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority* in which the court explicitly stated that "Projected future conditions may be used as the sole baseline for impacts analysis if their use in place of measured existing conditions—departure from the norm stated in Guideline section 15125 (a) is justified by unusual aspects of the project or the surrounding conditions."³ Therefore, SCAQMD staff recommends that the lead agency provide additional discussion in the Supplemental FEIR that substantiates the use of various baselines and clarifies the distinction between existing conditions, future conditions and project conditions relative to project impacts.

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GR2 (Continued)

Because both the future and existing conditions baselines are relevant to assessing impacts from this project, the lead agency should determine the significance of impacts utilizing both. } 9 cont.

San Joaquin Hills
Transportation
Corridor Agency

Chairman:
Ruth Hill
Newport Beach

GR3



Facility/Eastern
Transportation
Corridor Agency

Chairwoman:
Lisa A. Barlett
Dana Point

August 12, 2013

Ms. Smita Deshpande
Caltrans – District 12
“Attn: 405 SDEIR-DEIS Comment Period”
2201 Dupont Drive, Suite 200
Irvine, CA 92612

RE: Comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for the Interstate 405 Improvement Project in Orange County

Dear Ms. Deshpande:

The San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Agency (TCA) appreciates the opportunity to review and provide comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/EIS) for the Interstate 405 (I-405) Improvement Project. TCA previously submitted comments on the DEIR/EIS in June 2012 and would like to provide additional comments for the record:

- 1) TCA strongly suggests that we work with your agency and others to achieve a direct connection within the existing median at the I-405/SR 73 interchange. This connection should be included in whatever alternative is ultimately chosen for this project.
- 2) TCA also requests that Caltrans initiate discussions between our agency and the appropriate partners to effectuate and improve connections within the City of Costa Mesa.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to review the Supplemental DEIR/EIS and we look forward to the final EIR/EIS for the project. Should you have any questions or require any clarification regarding these comments, please feel free to contact Ms. Valarie McFall, Director, Environmental Services at 949.754.3475 or via email at vmcfall@thetollroads.com or Mr. David Lowe, Acting Chief Engineer at 949.754.3488 or via email at dlowe@thetollroads.com.

Sincerely,

Rush Hill, Chair
San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Agency

cc: TCA Board of Directors
Darrell Johnson, OCTA

Neil Peterson, Chief Executive Officer

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RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT (REGIONAL) COMMENTS (GR)

Response to Comment Letter GR1

Comment GR1-1

Caltrans and OCTA thank you for participating in the environmental process for the I-405 Improvement Project. Your comments on new information and analysis presented within the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS were considered during identified of the Preferred Alternative, as described in the Final EIR/EIS. You will be notified at the address provided in your comment when the Final EIR/EIS is available for review.

Caltrans District 12 and OCTA have been coordinating with the City of Long Beach and Caltrans District 7 on the project. The fair share percentages included in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS Measures T-10 and T-11 represent the proportionality for distribution of the costs of the improvements among the parties. The fair share funding for SR-22/7th Street is fully explained in the Responses to Long Beach Comments GL2-5 and GL2-6.

Comment GR1-2

The cross section of each of the build alternatives at the Los Angeles county line is unchanged from the existing condition. Caltrans District 12 and OCTA have no plans to make improvements to the I-405/I-605/SR-22 interchange beyond those currently under construction as part of the West County Connectors Project and those included in the proposed I-405 Improvement Project; however, Caltrans District 12 and OCTA will fully collaborate with Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) and Gateway Cities Council of Governments (GCCOG) in evaluating potential improvements to the interchange as part of ongoing planning and programming processes at any or all of the agencies.

Comment GR1-3

For a discussion of the Orange County Transportation Analysis Model (OCTAM) and Gateway Cities travel demand forecasting models, please see the Response to Long Beach Comment GR2-9. A comparison was made between the Gateway Cities model and the OCTAM model during development of the supplemental traffic study, and the forecast volume differences between the two were found to be within the range of validation error.

Comment GR1-4

The design exceptions are identified in the Draft Project Report, which is available on request from Caltrans. Design exceptions are not typically identified individually in environmental documents.

Comment GR1-5

Ramp analysis is included in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS. Table 2-4 presents ramp and ramp junction peak-hour level of service (LOS) and other data for the existing condition; future condition ramp junction analysis is presented in Tables 3-6, 3-9, 4-6, 4-9, 5-6, 5-9, 6-6, and 6-9. Analysis of LOS and queuing on-ramp approaches to arterial intersections are presented in Tables 2-1 and 2-2, respectively, for the existing condition; future conditions are presented in Tables 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4, 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, and 6-4. The analysis included in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS is consistent with the analysis presented in the Draft EIR/EIS.

Comment GR1-6

It is agreed that the projected traffic volumes for the build alternatives should not decrease compared to the No Build Alternative, unless there is some diversion onto other roadways. The decrease in the traffic volumes is minor (from 990/1,210 during the AM/PM peak hours under the No Build Alternative in 2040 to 870/1,080 under Alternative 1, 850/1,040 under Alternative 2, and 860/1,080 under Alternative 3). To the extent that this volume reduction results in diversion to other paths, increased traffic on those other paths has been accounted for and analyzed in the arterial analysis presented in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS and Draft EIR/EIS.

Comment GR1-7

Caltrans appreciate Metro's effort reviewing the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS. After further investigation of the traffic volumes presented in the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS, we have identified the cause of the lower high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) volumes on I-405 in Los Angeles County under Alternative 3 than under Alternatives 1 and 2 as an inconsistency in processing the traffic volumes, which is revised and corrected in the Final EIR/EIS. The revised traffic volumes show an increase in HOV volumes under Alternative 3 compared to Alternatives 1 and 2. The revised volumes and volume-to-capacity (v/c) ratios presented in the Final EIR/EIS do not materially change the findings of the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS.

Comment GR1-8

The Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS includes analysis of locations in Los Angeles County. The locations referred to in the comment are all in Orange County and are covered in the Draft EIR/EIS and the *Traffic Study Report – San Diego Freeway (I-405) Improvement Project SR-73 to I-605*. No microsimulations were completed of these areas.

With respect to the locations where the additional general purpose (GP) lanes included in all of the build alternatives terminate within the I-405 interchange at SR-22/7th Street/I-605, please see

Common Response – Traffic Flow at the Orange County/Los Angeles County Line where a detailed summary of the analysis presented in the Draft EIR/EIS and Traffic Study is provided.

With respect to the areas where the Express Lanes in Orange County transition to the HOV lanes in Los Angeles County, traffic operations analysis is presented on page 3.1.6-96 and in Table 3.1.6-17 (page 3.1.6-97) of the Draft EIR/EIS.

Comment GR1-9

The Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS includes analysis of locations in Los Angeles County. The locations referred to in the comment are in Orange County. The Draft EIR/EIS and the *Traffic Study Report – San Diego Freeway (I-405) Improvement Project SR-73 to I-605* include evaluations of the I-405/I-605/SR-22 interchange referenced in the comment. Table 2.3.1 of the Traffic Study shows the existing traffic volume, volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratio, vehicle density, and LOS during the AM and PM peak hours in each direction for each mainline freeway link along I-405 within the project area. The table also includes evaluation of I-605 north of I-405. Tables 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 provide these same data for the No Build Alternative in years 2020 and 2040. Tables 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 5.4.1, and 5.4.2 provide these data for Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, respectively. The operations of the branch connectors (freeway-to-freeway ramps) within the interchange are summarized in Table 2.3.2 of the Traffic Study for the existing condition. Branch connectors under future conditions are summarized in Tables 2.4.3, 2.4.4, 2.4.5, 2.5.3, 2.5.4, 2.5.5, 2.6.3, 2.6.4, 2.6.5, 2.7.3, 2.7.4, and 2.7.5. Branch connector data are summarized in Tables 3.1.6-9 and 3.1.6-15 of the Draft EIR/EIS. For a discussion of northbound I-405 as it approaches the interchange, please see Common Response – Traffic Flow at the Orange County/Los Angeles County Line.

Response to Comment Letter GR2

Comment GR2-1

Caltrans and OCTA thank you for participating in the environmental process for the I-405 Improvement Project. Your comments on new information and analysis presented within the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS were considered during identified of the Preferred Alternative, as described in the Final EIR/EIS. You will be notified at the address provided in your comment when the Final EIR/EIS is available for review.

Please see Appendix R1, Response to Comment GR4-16, for the response to South Coast Air Quality Management District's (SCAQMD) comment on the air quality analysis of the bottleneck at the north end of the project. The Draft EIR/EIS and Traffic Study provide data on traffic conditions on I-405 near the north end of the project. These data were used in the

determination of emissions and air quality impacts. See also Common Response – Traffic Flow at the Orange County/Los Angeles County Line.

Comment GR2-2

With the implementation of proposed traffic measures T-10 and T-11, all project contributions to adverse cumulative effects at all of these intersections would be minimized. As described in Measure T-10, improvements to City of Long Beach intersections shall be implemented by the City of Long Beach, with the City of Long Beach bearing responsibility for necessary clearances and permits. As described in Measure T-11, proposed improvements to Caltrans intersections shall be implemented by Caltrans, with Caltrans bearing responsibility for necessary clearances and permits. Therefore, the City of Long Beach and Caltrans would be responsible for quantifying any potential air quality impacts as a result of future improvements at these intersections.

Comment GR2-3

The significant impacts referenced in the comment are cumulative significant impacts. The proposed I-405 project contributes to those impacts but is not responsible for fully causing or fully mitigating these impacts. The mitigation is the payment of the fair share, not the implementation of the proposed improvement. Measures T-10 and T-11 require that OCTA enter into agreements with the City of Long Beach and Caltrans, respectively. Those agreements will specify the responsibilities of the parties to use the funds provided by OCTA to fund only the implementation of the improvements identified in the measures. The source of the remainder of the funds to implement the improvements identified in the measures is the responsibility of the implementing agency as in any fair share arrangement. The Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS acknowledges that the portion of the funding for the improvements identified in the measures that is not provided by OCTA has not been identified. On page 4-27, the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS states: “Caltrans is committed to the fair share funding percentages as stated below. However, if the City of Long Beach and the State of California are unable to get 100 percent of the remaining funds, then Measure T-10 and/or Measure T-11 will be deemed infeasible due to impacts identified as significant and not fully mitigable; consequently, Findings and a Statement of Overriding Considerations would be prepared for inclusion in the Final EIR/EIS to comply with State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 3, Section 15903), and the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations (Title 21 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 11, Section 1501).”

Comment GR2-4

Section 4-1 of the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS provides a comparison of the future build conditions to the existing condition. This comparison is the basis for the identification of cumulative significant impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 4-1 also includes a comparison of the build conditions to the no-build condition to determine the extent of the project's contribution to the cumulative significant impacts.

Comment GR2-5

Responses to all comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS and the Draft EIR/EIS will be provided in the Final EIR/EIS. With regard to a potential bottleneck at the north end of the project, please see Response to Comment GR2-1.

Comment GR2-6

Please see Appendix R1, Response to Comment GR4-16, for the response to SCAQMD's comment on the air quality analysis of the bottleneck at the north end of the project.

Comment GR2-7

Please see Response to Comment GR2-2 above.

Comment GR2-8

The significant impacts referenced in the comment are cumulative significant impacts. The proposed I-405 project contributes to those impacts but is not responsible for fully causing or fully mitigating these impacts. The mitigation is the payment of the fair share, not the implementation of the proposed improvement. Please see Response to Comment GR2-3.

Comment GR2-9

Section 4-1 of the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS provides a comparison of the build conditions to the existing condition. This comparison is the basis for the identification of cumulative significant impacts under CEQA. Section 4-1 also includes a comparison of the future build conditions to the no-build condition to determine the extent of the project's contribution to the cumulative significant impacts. Chapter 3 of the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS determines adverse effects of the project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) using a comparison of the future build conditions to the future no-build condition.

Response to Comment Letter GR3**Comment GR3-1**

Caltrans and OCTA thank you for participating in the environmental process for the I-405 Improvement Project. Your comment is not specific to the new information and analysis presented within the Supplemental Draft EIR/EIS; however, your comments were addressed in Appendix R1 (Response to Comments on Draft EIR/EIS). You will be notified at the address provided in your comment when the Final EIR/EIS is available for review.

A direct connector between the medians of I-405 and SR-73 is included in Alternative 3, but it is not included in Alternatives 1 and 2, whose southern project limits are north of Harbor Boulevard.

Please see Common Response – Preferred Alternative Identified.